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ABSTRACT

Since 1901, there have been four generations of community college development. Between 1901 and 1930, community colleges were seen as an extension of high school, serving the college-age person by providing collegiate-level academic work or remediation to prepare the student for the junior year of college at a university. The second generation of community colleges (1930-1950) was profoundly affected by the Depression, which brought a practical and economic emphasis to the junior college, and by World War II, which resulted in large numbers of adults demanding educational opportunities. The third generation (1950-1970) was the golden age for community colleges in terms of financial support and educational access for all. The high-minded dream of the third generation came face-to-face with harsh reality during the fourth generation (1970-1985) when community colleges nationwide were faced with a precipitous decline in financial support. The fifth generation of community colleges will be shaped by social trends which are already identifiable. Mirroring the society, community colleges will become more varied and complex, and more focused on the individual. An agenda to sustain the development of community colleges during their fifth generation should include the following: (1) a new vision of community colleges must be developed; (2) leadership must take responsibility for developing that vision and the organizational culture to realize the vision; (3) faculty and staff must be recognized as the most important resource; and (4) the open door must remain open to all. (EJV)

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MEMORANDUM

February 25, 1986

TO: Members, State Board
FROM: John N. Terrey *John N. Terrey*
SUBJECT: Inventing the Fifth Generation

(This paper is the logical descendant of an earlier paper--Community Colleges on the Chopping Block--dated January 15, 1986.)

Introduction

Essentially, vision is a mental journey
from the known to the unknown, creating
the future from a montage of current facts,
hopes, dreams, dangers, and opportunities.

-Craig R. Hickman and Michael A. Silva

Clark Kerr, the perceptive elder statesman of higher education, in a preface to a new book--Renewing the American Community College--writes about the colleges with a note of sadness and concern:

The builders are almost all gone; the managers have taken over. Most of them are highly efficient. But a few of the presidents have become primarily survivors; and in the process of surviving, some have become servants to any group or person with power. The clear visions are almost gone. What remains are questions and speculations about new directions, on top of the strong base of past accomplishments.

Dale Tillery and William L. Deegan speak of the four generations of community colleges from 1901 to 1985. They pose several questions. What is the Fifth Generation to be? Are the community colleges to drift from one catchy concept to another without vision or unity or leadership? Are the community colleges to develop a renewed vision and to find new leadership to invent a Fifth Generation to be built upon the grandeur of past achievements?

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Those who are today in roles of leadership have accepted the responsibility to guide the process of inventing a viable future. Bennis and Nanus state, "Leadership is what gives an organization its vision and its ability to translate that vision into reality." Later, they observe and thereby echo Clark Kerr: "The problem with many organizations, and especially the ones that are failing, is that they tend to be overmanaged and underled."² Their contention is that managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing.

The community colleges need to re-examine what they are doing and what they should be doing. They need to take a new vision to the people--especially the decision-makers--for understanding and acceptance and support.

The First Four Generations

From the beginning of the first public junior college in Joliet, Illinois, to today with its 1,222 community-junior-technical colleges, these institutions have gone through four distinct and different periods or generations. From its humble beginning as an extension of the high school in association with the University of Chicago, the movement has grown until today it serves a great diversity of students as well as almost 40 percent of all the students in higher education (4,836,819 students). In the West, the "junior" college has flourished. California today has ten percent of all the community colleges in the nation. California, Arizona, Washington, and Oregon have highly developed, mature systems of community colleges. In terms of participation rates (enrollment per thousand of the population), the four states respectively rank first, second, third, and sixth. By contrast, in the Northeast, which is older, the dependence is on private rather than public, on four-year rather than two-year institutions.

In the state of Washington, Frederick Bolton, a follower of William Rainey Harper--the founding president of the University of Chicago--arrived at the University of Washington in the early part of the century. He encouraged one of his graduate students who also was the principal of Everett High School to launch a junior college as an extension of the high school. The year was 1915. The pattern was almost an exact repetition of the Joliet/University of Chicago experiment.

Generation 1: Extension of High School (1901-1930)

There were three forces shaping the fledgling educational institution which was uniquely American in character. First was the rapid rise of the research university. Second was the continuing democratization of public education. (In 1901, when Joliet became the first public junior college only ten percent of the youth of high school age were enrolled in high school.) Third was the rapid industrialization of the nation. Obviously, Harper had a hierarchical structure in mind when he coined the term "junior college."³ He wanted to free the developing research university from the tasks of lower division study so as to concentrate on advanced study. That concept provided a structure for the growing human aspirations and the surging economic forces brought on by industrial expansion.

In the early years, the junior college was clearly an extension of the high school. It served the college-age person by providing collegiate-level academic work or remedial work to help prepare the student for the junior year of college. If the mother of the junior college was the American high school, the father was clearly the American university, especially the research universities of Chicago, Michigan, California at Berkeley, and Stanford. As a consequence, the conflicting elements of egalitarianism and elitism were evident; they were in the genes. In design, the new "junior college" extended the philosophy of the Land Grant Act of 1862. (The Morrill Act signed by Abraham Lincoln is generally regarded as the outstanding educational achievement of the 19th century.)

By 1930 there were 436 junior colleges, the majority (258) were private institutions. All were small, averaging approximately 160 students per institution. They were in all but five of the 48 states with the private institutions in the South and the Northeast while the public institutions were in the West and Midwest. California had 20 percent of the public institutions and one-third of all the students. Washington had three junior colleges--Centralia, Skagit Valley, and Yakima.

Generation 2: The Junior College (1930-1950)

The Depression had a profound effect on the junior college. Sustained were the original purposes--a legacy from the first generation. Expansion took a practical and economic turn. People sought training to become competitive for the few jobs which appeared. While funding, especially state funding, diminished, the idea of the junior college continued to flourish. Longview, Washington, in 1934 started a junior college without any significant financial support but with a firm belief in the idea of the junior college. The curriculum became more comprehensive with the rapid development of vocational programs; however, the transfer program with its remedial companion still dominated.

Late in the period, after the Depression and World War II, a large volume of students, primarily veterans, demanded educational opportunity. A grateful nation through the Congress enacted in 1944 by unanimous vote the Servicemen's Readjustment Act which without doubt provided opportunity undreamed of by earlier generations. It was at this time that President Harry Truman appointed his famous commission to study higher education. (Truman ironically was the last occupant of the White House who did not attend college.) One of the key questions Truman put to his commission was whether traditional higher education could serve the needs of the increased demand placed upon higher education. The answer was a forceful "no." The commission called for the establishment of a new college to serve the variety of needs of the growing numbers of people seeking higher education. The new college should serve not only the "new" students but also the communities in which they were located. They were to be "community" colleges.⁴ Also of great significance was another finding of the commission that declared that 49 percent of the high school graduates could benefit from at least two years of additional study.

The belief of equal educational opportunity was surging throughout the social fabric of the nation. It was joined by another propelling conviction: Education came to be recognized as a more powerful force in economic growth than the historic trinity identified by Adam Smith in his 1776 classic, The Wealth of Nations. His trinity was: land, labor, and capital.

While the strong and clear conclusions of the Truman Commission and the magnificent G. I. Bill expanded higher education, it did not succeed in creating a new college to serve the new student. Traditional higher education continued to dominate the structure of the junior college from 1930 to 1950. In the rise of egalitarianism, meritocracy dominated the structure. The mission consisted of six functions:

1. Lower division preparation for university transfer,
2. Transfer and career orientation and guidance,
3. General education,
4. Remediation,
5. Terminal education, and
6. Adult education.

"Terminal education" in addition to being a gross descriptor also demonstrated the hold that traditional higher education had over the junior college.

Cross summarized this period:

To date, we have concentrated on making New Students over into the image of traditional students, so that they can be served by traditional education. Our concern has been the creation of access models to education. We have devised all kinds of ways to make New Students eligible to participate in traditional higher education. Remedial courses are designed to remove academic "deficiencies"; counseling removes motivational "deficiencies"; financial aid removes financial "deficiencies." However, if the answer to the question, who should go to college? is to be an egalitarian response of "everyone," then educational systems will have to be designed to fit the learning needs of New Students.⁵

Only 40 new colleges were added in the 20 years from 1930 to 1950--two per year--but the stage was set for the greatest period of growth in the history of higher education. During the next 20 years, a new college was to spring up virtually every week.

During Generation 2 six junior colleges were added in Washington.

Generation 3: The Community College (1950-1970)

Dale Tillery and William L. Deegan observed that "it is not an overstatement to say that Generation 3 was the golden age of financial support for community colleges."⁶ It was a period of great confidence and phenomenal growth. This generation brought forth new leaders. Leland Medsker wrote in 1960 the most influential book of the period--The Junior College: Progress and Prospects. Clark Kerr capped the period with a publication by the prestigious Carnegie Commission for Higher Education entitled The Open Door Colleges. This was the high tide of the open door philosophy required to assure equal access to educational opportunity.

Generation 3 also saw the awakening of hope for minorities. The hope was often cloaked in anger; however, in community colleges, the prevailing philosophy was compatible with the hopes. Burton Clark, a sociologist, used San Jose in California to highlight the subtle conflicts behind the open door. In his classic study, The Open Door College (1960), he identified the inherent discrimination in a process he called "the cooling out function." He wrote:

The latent terminal student is allowed into transfer curriculum but encounters counseling and testing that invite him to consider alternatives, subtle pressures to hedge his bet by taking courses that serve a terminal destiny, tough talk in orientation classes about realistic occupational choices, probationary status, perhaps, and finally grades that will not allow transferring.

It was in Generation 3 that the Washington legislature enacted the Community College Act of 1967 which established the present community college system and set its mission. It was clearly egalitarian in spirit. Opportunity was to be available to all regardless of geography, socio-economic status, academic record--all at a cost within one's ability to pay.

The number of public community colleges more than doubled during this 20 year period. Enrollment tripled in the nation. Washington added 14 colleges to what was now a statewide system.

Generation 4: The Comprehensive Community College (1970-1985)

The high-minded dream which reached its apogee in Generation 3 came face-to-face with harsh reality during Generation 4. In Washington, for example, the legislature decreed that community service courses would be supported by the student, not by the state. While enrollments soared, the ability of the state to support financially the community college system it had created began to flag. An economic recession beginning in 1980 brought about drastic reductions in funding and corresponding reductions in enrollment as a consequence. The golden age had ended. A period of agonizing reappraisal began relative to the mission of the comprehensive community college. There were four reasons for the reappraisal.

First, and most obvious, was the precipitous decline in financial support. This fact alone forcefully created a basic re-examination of the mission of the community college. Critics claimed that community colleges were trying to be all things for all people. Edmund J. Gleazer, the president of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) from 1958 to 1981, argued that there should be more community in the college. He argued for lifelong learning and community-based education. The college in his vision was to be a catalyst in community change.⁸ The legislature did not object philosophically; it tightened the purse strings and forced the colleges to decide which functions to delete.

Second was the declining importance of the traditional transfer function. While enrollments soared during the 1970s, the number of students transferring remained relatively constant. The growth was taking place in career and continuing education. There was, as a consequence, a rapid increase in the number of part-time students.

Third was the trend toward less than college-level instruction. This trend represented the fastest-growing sector within the community college. Remedial, developmental, and compensatory education grew with the advent of federal legislation like Adult Basic Education, with the introduction of English-as-a-Second Language, and with the growing number of high school dropouts or high school graduates without the basic skills to survive at the collegiate level.

Fourth was the rapid technological changes which made the return to college a necessary means to acquire the skills required to remain employable. To vocational/occupational preparatory programs were added vocational supplemental programs. The computer changed the work place.

The demand for remedial/development education and for job-upgrade/career change training were the result of societal changes. But, because they were not traditional collegiate functions, they were not readily understood or accepted by many people, including the decision-makers whose perception of college was traditional. In summary, Generation 4 saw a major shift as the community college took on an increasing number of non-traditional collegiate functions which were and are of great social import. At the same time, the community college became less traditional and, as a consequence, became less understood in terms of mission by many of those whose educational experiences had been traditional.

The Focus of the Community College

There are two primary foci for the community college of today. One is vertical and traditional. The other is horizontal and non-traditional. Too many decision-makers view these two foci as a dichotomy. In reality, both are essential. One needs to decide how much of each is needed and where, but both are needed in some degree everywhere.

Of the two, the vertical focus is the more easily understood and the more readily accepted. At the base of the vertical focus is the school, beginning with the kindergarten. At the top are the baccalaureate institutions, the professional schools, and the graduate schools. Between the high school and the baccalaureate institution is the community college. Because of its location on the vertical axis, it fits into the traditional mode. In this context, the transfer and the vocational preparatory programs are paramount. Those students enrolled in the transfer program tend to be full-time and tend to reflect the modal collegiate group of 18-24 years of age. Most pronounced among the exceptions in age are the baby boomers aged 25-40 who did not attend college earlier but later perceived a need to gain a formal education.

To sustain and develop the vertical focus the community college needs to work even more closely with the high school and with the four-year institutions. Programs need to be developed jointly for the benefit of the learner. The 2+2 (high school/community college) plan has to be seriously developed. By relating the four-year institutions to the process, it becomes a 2+2+2. Especially the high school and the community college need to develop a similar tract for technical and vocational students. Careful and coordinated development will not only help the student by focusing learning, but the time which it takes a student to complete a program should be shortened thereby reducing the cost to both the student and the state. The key from the perspective of the student is the focus put on learning. Focused learning is effective learning.

Learning should be fun, but not necessarily easy. Standards need to be preserved and the students need to be assisted to achieve the standards to assure quality. It is a helping, not a sorting, process. An adequate, workable, vertical focus for community colleges is not a dream. It currently is in operation in many places, most notably at Miami-Dade Community College. The community colleges need to reassert their place between the high school and the four-year institution. The vertical focus emphasizes the college in the term "community college." It usually is similar from place to place.

Enrollment is confusing because there are full-time equivalent students (FTE) and headcount students. In the total FTEs are more significant within the vertical focus while headcount enrollments are more significant within the horizontal focus. In terms of FTEs, the vertical focus is the larger producer. In terms of people (headcount), the horizontal focus is the larger producer.

The 1970s saw more than 50 percent of the students in the traditional transfer/occupational mode. By 1980, the majority had shifted to the horizontal focus, the non-traditional mode. The budget cuts of the early 1980s reduced this group but only temporarily. The horizontal focus puts the emphasis on the community. It seldom is the same from community to community. Linkages are established with the community. For example, business is a full partner. The specific retraining needs of industry are addressed. Customized job skill programs are developed between the industries in the community and the colleges. Programs are developed with senior centers, libraries, museums, and performing arts groups. The horizontal focus is more informal than the vertical focus. It is shaped by the community, not by the formal educational establishment. For several reasons, it is anticipated that by the end of the decade the growth will be more along the horizontal focus than the vertical focus.

The informality of the horizontal focus can be seen by the fact that the goal is specific learning, not degrees for credentials. Most of the students are part-time seeking specific skills. When the skills are learned, the student leaves. Credits and transfer concerns are absent. In fact, many of the participants already have a baccalaureate degree or more.

Who are the horizontal focus students? They are almost all part-time students enrolled for any of the following diverse reasons:

- Adult literacy
- Skill development (especially math and English, but beyond the literacy level)
- Job upgrade (probably the largest single group)
- Career change (including displaced homemakers)
- Life-long learners (people with AA degree or higher who value learning and participate in structured learning experiences every couple of years for a multitude of reasons)
- Self-development (people who need to prove they can do "X" and have decided college is the setting in which to do their proving--sometimes it is related to academic achievement, sometimes to social achievement)
- Home and family life (parents seeking to develop their parenting skills)

These people are of all ages served by the community college. Since they are seeking a specific skill, the vast majority of these students attend the college only for one quarter--a very different pattern from the vertical focus students who generally would be considered failures if they only attended one quarter.

The Megatrends

Leaders require foresight, so that they can judge how the vision fits into the way the environment of the organization may evolve; hindsight, so that the vision does not violate the traditions and culture of the organization; a world view, within which to interpret the impact of possible new developments and trends; depth perception, so that the whole picture can be seen in appropriate detail and perspective; peripheral vision, so that the possible responses of competitors and other stakeholders to the new direction can be comprehended; and a process of revision, so that all visions previously synthesized are constantly reviewed as the environment changes.

-Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus

The community colleges need to re-examine what they are doing and what they should be doing. They need to take a new vision to the people for understanding and acceptance and support.

What are the trends which are shaping the Fifth Generation in the community college movement?

1. Adults will continue to turn to the community colleges in increasing numbers seeking occupational, retraining, skill development, remediation for job seeking, and lifelong learning to nourish the mind. There will be larger numbers, and they will be more varied in need, background, and age. They will tend to fit along the horizontal focus rather than the vertical focus; however, there will be many more part-time students in the vertical focus.
2. Community colleges will reflect more than ever the communities they serve by providing the type of programs sought and needed. They will need to remain flexible in order to remain responsive.
3. New technologies and new information will change how and where people learn. Students will become even more central. They will be assessed to determine their prior learning and present needs. They will be placed in programs to assist them to meet the high standards required of quality. Faculty development will be needed for the utilization of new learning technologies and new instructional strategies.
4. A growing economy generated by education as the central force in economic growth will provide the resources for the expansion and improvement of education. Education begets education. Revenue spent on education returns revenue. Education as an investment continues as a growth industry; however, as higher risk students enter the system, the return on investment will decline in an economic sense although increase in a human sense.
5. Facilities and equipment will be needed to replace the old and to keep pace with a rapidly-changing technology. Many of the structures of the 1960s will be in need of repair, remodeling, or replacement. Much of the equipment is outdated.
6. Faculty and staff will be viewed as human resources and will be developed and nurtured as the valuable resources they are. They cannot be viewed as labor--as merely a cost of doing business. They are a resource--the most valuable resource.

In short, the changes in society will bring forth the changes needed in the community colleges. Society will shape the mission of the community college. As the shaping society works, that society will be varied and complex. The community colleges, mirroring the society, will become more varied and more complex and more focused on the individual.

Conclusion

"Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps;
for he is the only animal that is struck with the
differences between what things are and what they ought to be."

-William Hazlett

The costs and the problems of sustaining the development of the community college are great, but greater yet are the social and economic costs related to the failure of sustaining the development of the community college.

Here is an agenda for action:

1. A new vision of community colleges must be developed for the Fifth Generation. It needs to accept as of equal importance both the traditional vertical focus and the non-traditional horizontal focus.
2. Leadership must be responsible for developing the vision and for developing the organizational culture required to make the vision a reality.
3. The trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and community are the central elements in the organizational culture. Edwin Schein defines an organization's culture as a learned product which develops over time, resulting in a shared view and collective agreement in the constructive way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems of external adaptation and internal integration.⁹
4. Faculty and staff must be recognized as the most important resource regardless of the focus developed for the Fifth Generation. They must be paid better and must be supported through staff development. Faculty need to assert themselves by creating and sustaining the institutional culture which gives identity to the institution and meaning to its purpose.
5. Standards must be maintained as opportunity is extended to more people with a greater variety of needs. Again, the faculty must assume the responsibility.
6. Focus needs to be placed on the individual student as a learner. Before individual learning programs can be designed, it is necessary to assess the learning skills of the student so as to prescribe the program needed and the placement of the student. Outcomes need to be perceived as skills learned and not merely as credits earned. Community colleges must be places of learning and not become places where sorting is substituted for teaching.
7. The open door must remain open to all. Education is opportunity. Opportunity through education must be open to all who are willing to work to attain the standards of quality established by the college.

President Robert McCabe led Miami-Dade through a major reform under circumstances that would have defeated most presidents and left the college in turmoil for years to come. He adopted four guiding principles for his reform: (1) open access must be maintained; (2) if access was to be achieved, the college had to be much more directive; (3) the college had to be more supportive of students; and, finally, (4) high standards had to be maintained.

Within the fabric of the nation, the community college in this century has written the most significant and poignant chapter in the history of American education. Its brightest chapter may yet be written.

FOOTNOTES

¹William L. Deegan, Dale Tillery and Associates, Renewing the American Community College (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985), p. viii.

²Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), p. 21.

³While William Rainey Harper is given credit for coining the term "junior college," the Truman Commission in its report, Higher Education for American Democracy (1947), coined the term "community college." In the state of Washington, the legislature in 1961 adopted the term "community college."

⁴"New" students was a name given by K. Patricia Cross to those students who by virtue of academic background, field of study, or social/economic background would not obtain access to traditional higher education. See Beyond the Open Door (1971).

⁵K. Patricia Cross, Beyond the Open Door (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1971), pp. 4-5.

⁶Dale Tillery, William L. Deegan and Associates, Renewing the American Community College (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1985), p. 13.

⁷Burton R. Clark, The Open Door College (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), p. 163.

⁸Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., The Community College: Values, Vision and Vitality, (Washington, D. C.: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges).

⁹Edgar H. Schein, Organization Culture and Leadership (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1985), p.9.